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THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
BULLETIN OF INFORMATION No 3 JULY 1904

SUGGESTIONS
TO
PUBLIC LIBRARIES
AND
LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
RELATIVE TO
COLLECTING AND PRESERVING
MATERIALS OF LOCAL
HISTORY

TRAVELING LIBRARY
STATE OF IOWA



THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY IOWA JULY 1904

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SUGGESTIONS TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND LOCAL
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES IN IOWA RELATIVE TO
COLLECTING AND PRESERVING THE
MATERIALS OF LOCAL HISTORY

In collecting and preserving the materials of local history, the public libraries of Iowa have an important function to perform. They should aim to do for their local communities what the State Historical Society of Iowa is attempting to do for the State at large. Furthermore, wherever it is practicable the public library should coöperate with the local historical society. Thus the public library and the local historical society may with advantage work together in collecting and preserving the materials of local history.

AMERICAN HISTORY

In the first place it is suggested that there should be placed upon the shelves of the public library several of the standard works on American history. The following are suggested as among the general works on American history which are especially suitable for the public libraries of Iowa:—*The American History Series*, 6 vols., Scribners; *Epochs of American History*, 3 vols., Longmans; Hart, *American History told by Contemporaries*, 4 vols., Macmillan; Schouler, *History of the United States*, 6 vols., Dodd, Mead & Co.; McMaster, *History of the People of the United States*, 6 vols., Appletons; Thorpe, *Constitutional History of the American People*, 2 vols., Harpers; Rhodes, *History of the United States from 1850*, 4 vols., Harpers; Channing and Hart, *Guide to American History*, Ginn & Co.; Channing, *The United States of America, 1765-1865*, Macmillan; Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, Macmillan; McMaster, *School History of the United States*, American Book Co.

IOWA HISTORY

In the second place it is suggested that the public library should aim to secure books and pamphlets bearing upon the history of Iowa. Among the most valuable of the publications on Iowa history are those issued by the State Historical Society of Iowa, which may be secured through the provision which the Society has made for library membership. (See *Bulletin of Information*, No. 2. It will be sent upon application). The larger libraries will doubtless aim to keep the public documents of the State, that is, the legislative documents, House and Senate journals, the Supreme Court reports, the official register, etc. (See *Check List of the Publications of the State of Iowa*. Apply to Iowa Library Commission, Des Moines, Iowa).

LOCAL HISTORY

In the third place it is suggested that the public library in cooperation with the local historical society should make a business of collecting and preserving the data and materials pertaining to the life and history of the community in which the library and historical society are located. Indeed, the public library should become the store house for all such matter as: (1) files of the local newspapers and sets of periodicals and journals published in the community; (2) official publications of the town and county in which the library is located (e. g., city ordinances, school laws, and reports of county officers); (3) local town or city directories; (4) announcements, programs, proceedings, etc., of all local historical, literary, scientific, political, philanthropical, educational, fraternal, and religious clubs and organizations; (5) books, pamphlets, articles, etc., written by men and women who live in the community in which the library is located; (6) photographs and autographs and autograph letters of prominent citizens; and (7) clippings relative to the local community.

The following suggestions may be of assistance to public libraries and local historical societies in preserving local history materials.

Besides the copies of local papers received for filing, an extra copy of each should be secured for clippings. Thus, obituaries may be

clipped, pasted in a large scrap book, indexed under the subject, and given a subject entry in the card catalogue. Other clippings may be mounted on note paper of octavo size and filed in pamphlet cases for safe keeping. This case may be lettered on the back with subject and volume number, which in abbreviated form should be repeated in pencil on the pamphlet itself, and serve as a reference or catalogue card. Sometimes enough material on one subject is clipped which when mounted will be found to be of sufficient interest and quantity to warrant binding in book form and being placed on the shelves with other volumes.

If the subject matter of a pamphlet is not considered of sufficient importance to enter in the current catalogue, but is still of enough interest to preserve, then it is easy to insert it with others of its kind where on occasion it may with slight trouble be found.

Manuscripts and letters may be bound by mounting them on transparent surgeon's plaster or architect's tracing paper. In this way it is possible to read a sheet written or printed on both sides. Mounted photographs, wood-cuts, newspaper clippings, manuscripts and letters are sometimes tastefully bound together to illustrate the life and work of some person or some notable historical event, making a unique and interesting volume or booklet.

Programs of women's and other clubs may be preserved in large manila envelopes and filed away in pamphlet cases in alphabetical or chronological order. Leaflets, announcements, constitutions of societies, and even concert and theater programs, lecture announcements, school programs—in fact, anything and everything—may be preserved and filed away either in manila envelopes or in the form of made-up pamphlets, and arranged either chronologically or alphabetically in pamphlet cases.

During political campaigns large scrap-books may be filled with leaflets, dodgers, broadsides, announcements, caricatures, posters, pictures, etc., illustrating the politics of the day.

THE MISSION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

[The following paragraphs are taken from an article by Mr. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.]¹

“All librarians who have in charge such treasures are aware of the general popular interest in old pamphlets, newspaper files, and the odds and ends of printed matter issued in ephemeral form, provided they are old enough to have ceased to be commonplace. That with which we are all familiar is commonplace, and generally held in slight value; but the commonplaces of one generation are the treasured relics of the next. It is not mere idle curiosity, this interest of ours in the things with which our fathers were familiar. Relics in museums enable us more accurately in imagination to redress the stage of history; but the literary ephemera of other days, preserved in libraries, are still more valuable as mirrors of the past. The chance advertisement in the old newspaper, the tattered playbill, the quaintly phrased pamphlet, or musty diary or letter of a former time, mean more to the modern historian than any other form of historical record. In earlier days, history was thought to be simply the doings of monarchs and the conduct of campaigns; but Macaulay and Green have shown us that the history of the people is what benefits us most,—how John and Mary lived in their wayside cottage, how Peter and Paul bargained in the market place, how the literati toiled in Grub street, and seafarers journeyed over the face of the deep.

“The other day Woodrow Wilson said, at the Princeton semi-centennial: ‘The world’s memory must be kept alive, or we shall never see an end to its old mistakes. We are in danger of becoming infantile in every generation. This is the real menace under which we cower in this age of change.’ It is the office of the historian to keep the world’s memory alive. There will never be an end of the writing of history. Some one has truly said, each generation must write all past history afresh, from its own changing standpoint. But that this may continue, and with increasing advantage, there must never be an

¹ Taken from the *Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 1896.

end of accumulating historical material; each generation must accumulate its own, for the benefit of its successor.

“In the libraries of the old world, there are many magnificent collections of broadsides, leaflets, tracts, pamphlets, which earnest, thoughtful men have, in past generations, accumulated for our benefit. One of the most notable of these is the collection known as the Thomason Tracts in the British Museum—30,000 specimens of the literary flotsam and jetsam of the middle of the seventeenth century,—pamphlets, circulars, prospectuses, broadsides, programmes, and what not,—each one carefully labeled by the industrious London bookseller, Thomason, with the day of its acquisition. Thus we have, for the entire period of the civil war in England, a faithful day-by-day picture of surpassing interest and value, to which historians are ever turning as to an inexhaustible mine of material, and concerning which Macaulay and a host of others have recorded words of the warmest praise.

“In olden times, enterprises of this character were left to the chance of individual initiative. To-day, they may be better, more systematically, done by public librarians. It is not possible, nor is it advisable, for every public library to engage in a task of this character, upon any extended scale. It is sufficient that a few great libraries undertake missions of this sort, libraries, perhaps, in widely-separated cities; but certain it is, that each public library can and should make collections of this character for its own community, and the library at the county seat should seek to cover, so far as may be, its own county.

“It is difficult to specify just what the local library should make a serious business of collecting; it is easier to make a list of what should not be gathered. But especially would we urge the accumulation of newspaper files, the daily or weekly mirror of the community's life; and these files should, if possible, be complete back to the beginning. All manner of published reports should be obtained—those of the common council, the county board of supervisors, the various public institutions located in the community; the published

memorial sermons, society year-books, printed rules and constitutions of local lodges, catalogues and programmes of local colleges and academies; published addresses of any sort; any manner of literature published by the churches, whether in the form of papers, membership lists, appeals for aid, or what not; programmes of local musicals, concerts, veteran camp fires, etc., would be found in time to have great interest to the local historian. In fact, all of this printed material will prove in due course of time to be a fund of information which shall make the library a Mecca for all who wish for any purpose to refresh their memory relative to the life of the town. Just as we regard everything familiar as commonplace and worthless, do we delude ourselves with the notion that we and ours are to live always. Librarians should remember that this generation and its affairs are but passing phases of world-life; in due course what they have gathered of the literary drift-wood of to-day will be of priceless value to their successors in office. Librarians are generally recognized as missionaries unto the present generation; but let us, in our zeal for present results, not forget to be as well missionaries unto the future, and thereby earn the praise which comes to him who plants a tree for the delectation of those who come after."

TRAVELING LIBRARY
STATE OF IOWA

LIBRARY MEMBERS

Any public, school, or college library in the State of Iowa may be enrolled as a library member upon application and the payment of a fee of \$1.00. Such library membership may be retained after the first year upon the payment of \$1.00 annually. Libraries enrolled as library members of THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA shall be entitled to receive the quarterly and all other publications of the Society issued during the period of their membership.

AUXILIARY MEMBERS

Local historical societies (such as county historical societies, city or town historical societies, and old settlers' associations) may be enrolled as auxiliary members of THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA upon application of such local historical societies and upon the approval of their applications by the Board of Curators of THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA.

Patriotic organizations within the State of Iowa (such as the Iowa Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Iowa Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Iowa Society of Colonial Wars, and the Iowa Society of Colonial Dames) may be enrolled as auxiliary members of THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA upon application of such organizations and upon the approval of their applications by the Board of Curators of THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA.

Auxiliary societies or organizations shall be entitled to membership in THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA and shall have one vote at the annual meeting of this Society. Each auxiliary society or organization shall be entitled to receive all the publications of THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA issued during the period of its affiliation as an auxiliary member.

Auxiliary societies or organizations shall not be required to pay any fees or dues to THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA.

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